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ABSTRACT

This study explores the linguistic abilities and political insights of African Americans in the inner city, focusing on the women and children of one particular neighborhood. Many of the research conversations were conducted with 12 members of 2 families. Based on more than 3 years of fieldwork, the book presents the oral, literate, and analytical strategies inner city residents use to gain resources, access to social institutions, and respect. The first chapter, "The Struggle and the Tools," provides an overview of the developmental process of learning, transferring, and evaluating. The second chapter, "Activist Methodology," discusses how the activist methods of the study resulted in a mutually rewarding relationship between the residents and the researcher. Chapter 3, "African Americans and Quayville," sketches the historical and community context of the study, and chapter 4, "The Language of Eviction," surveys the cyclic process by which language processes develop in this community. Chapters 5 and 6, "Institutional Language in an Inner City" and "'Racism Always on the Front of My Mind,'" examine the first phase of linguistic development and explore the effects that learning institutional language has on individuals' self-perceptions. Chapters 7 and 8, "'An Everyday Fight To Get Us Simple Respect'" and "The Transfer of Language in Gatekeeping Interactions," reveal how community members transfer their community-based language skills to their encounters with institutional agents. Chapters 9 and 10, "Evaluating the Tools" and "'Your Honor, I Just Can't Control Him Anymore,'" show the final phase in the process of institutional language development, focusing on the interaction among two teenage males, their mother, and a judge. Chapter 11, "Language and Power in the Everyday," continues the discussion of hegemony grounded in the daily lives and rhetorical and political tactics of inner city residents. (Contains 8 figures, 2 tables, and 118 references.) (SLD)

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